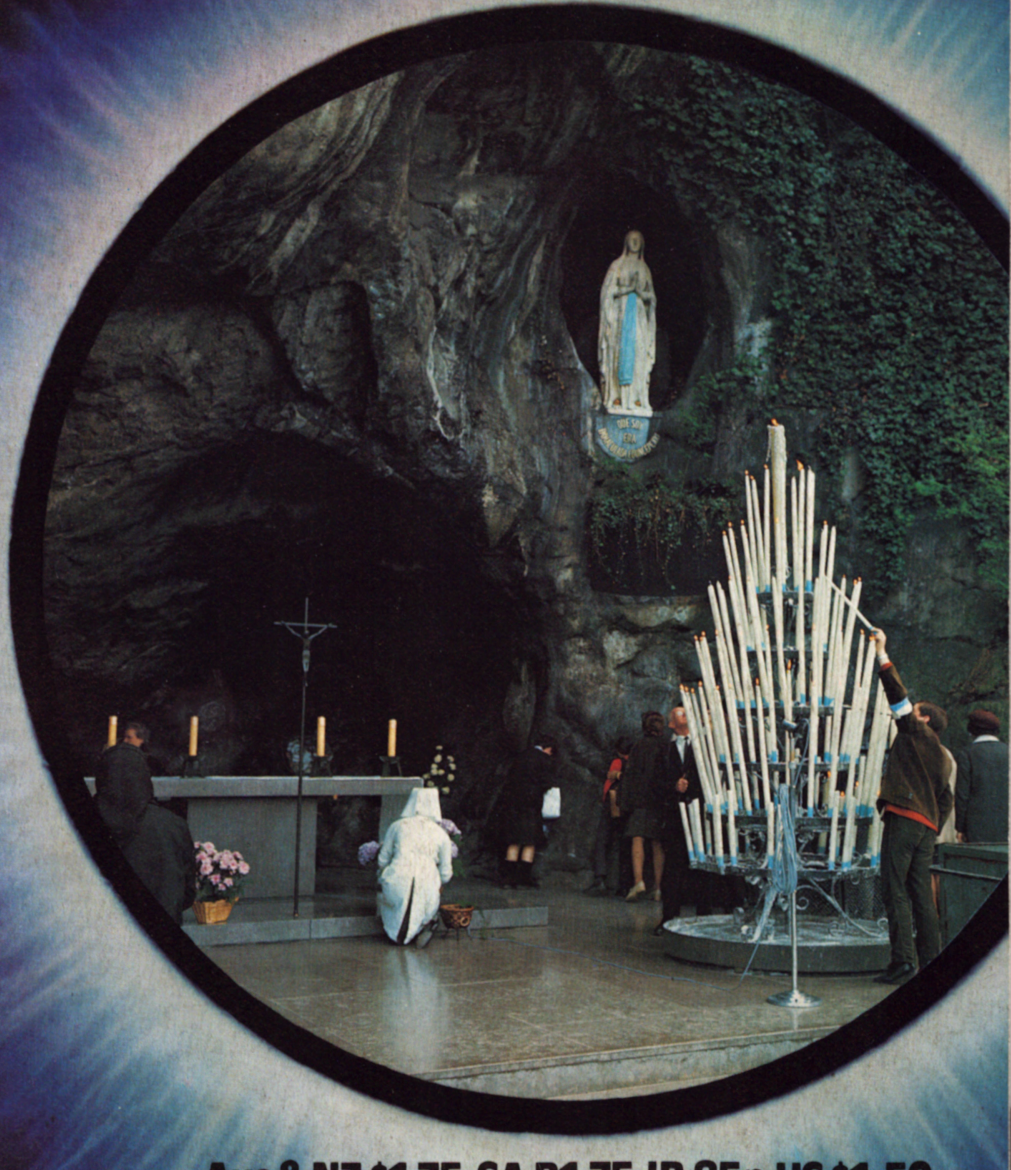
60p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

78

The Cock Lane ghost
Matthew Manning: healer
Contactee controversies
Visions of the Virgin
PK in the office



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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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In next week's issue
Why was Swiss-born Billy Meier, a small-time farmer and one-time thief, contacted by aliens from the Pleiades star system? How he took hundreds of photographs of their spacecraft, and volumes of notes concerning their wisdom and way of life, is described in the first of a new series on **The Meier case**. In **Great hauntings** the ghost of Cock Lane in London declares itself and makes accusations of murder! And in **Classic poltergeists** we discover who was responsible for the amazing manifestations in a lawyer's office in Bavaria. The latest findings about ley lines and earth energies are looked at in **Leys**. And to conclude, **Extra-sensory perception** examines the question of PK-generated 'escape routes'. Is it possible for psychic energy to cause something to happen in order for one to avoid an unpleasant task?
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Beware - PK at work

When a Bavarian lawyer started to have trouble with his telephone, he little suspected that his quiet office was about to be plagued by a massive poltergeist attack. COLIN GODMAN and LINDSAY ST CLAIRE describe one of the most startling cases of psychokinesis

A LAWYER'S OFFICE IN ROSENHEIM, Bavaria, was the unlikely setting for a poltergeist case that completely altered public opinion on the subject of poltergeists in Germany.

Armed with introductions from Hans Bender, director of the Freiburg Institute of Parapsychology, the authors travelled with a camera team to Rosenheim in the spring of 1975 to make a television documentary on the case for BBC television. Arriving at the centre of town, we sought out Königstrasse 13, a tall building in which various professional men had their consulting rooms, and which had been the scene of the notorious poltergeist activities we had come to investigate. They had centred on the office of a lawyer named Adam.

Top: the entrance to lawyer Adam's office at Königstrasse 13 in the quiet Bavarian town of Rosenheim (above). 'No 13' was to prove an unlucky address for Herr Adam as the increasing ferocity of the poltergeist there made work almost impossible

Herr Adam told us that the events that were to become so famous began quietly enough in the summer of 1967, when telephone malfunctions were reported by office staff. Calls to the office on Rosenheim 1233 had been interrupted by clicks or cut off, and sometimes all four receivers would ring at once although the line was dead. The malfunctions had become too frequent to overlook, and the office manager, Johannes Engelhard, called in repair men from Siemens, the company that had installed the equipment – a junction box and four telephones.

The Siemens engineers worked in the

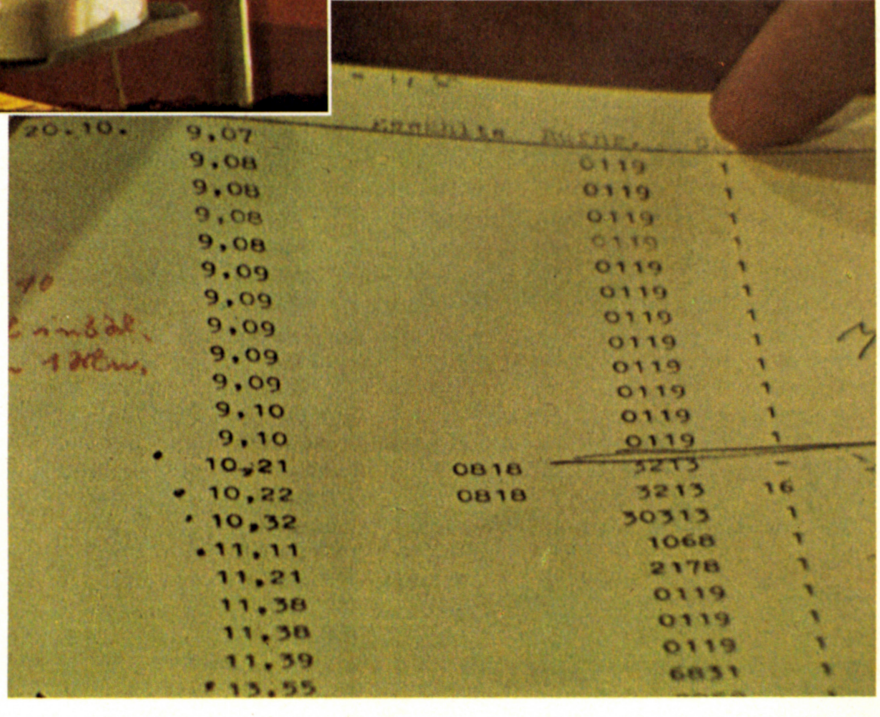
office for several weeks, testing wiring and equipment. Although they found no faults, they replaced the receivers and junction box – but, as this did not improve matters, they called in the post office.

Early in October, the post office replaced the Siemens equipment with official post office telephones. They installed a meter so that, as they were made, calls could be recorded visibly in the office on a counter, with a similar meter at the telephone exchange to provide an official record. At the same time, Herr Adam asked his staff, the office manager Johannes Engelhard, two office clerks and a part-time worker, to make a note of their calls.

On 5 October 1967, Adam and Engelhard were amazed to see the meter register a call although no one in the office was using the telephone. On 19 October, the same thing happened while Adam was with accountant, Dr Schmidt, who produced an affidavit for Adam to show the post office. Comparing the records from his own meter, the meter at the exchange and the notes of his staff, Adam realised that these two incidents were by no means isolated. Dozens of undialled calls had been registered. The post office insisted that all the calls had been made in the normal way and, even more peculiar, they had all been made to the speaking clock.

A row broke out between the post office and Herr Adam. Adam pointed out that all his staff had watches and could hear the chimes of at least two church clocks, and could therefore keep a record of the timing of their telephone calls. Furthermore, no one was ever alone in the office, and it was ridiculous to suppose that so many calls could have been made unnoticed by anyone.

Below: trouble with the telephone was the first sign of poltergeist activity in Herr Adam's office. No mechanical or electrical fault could be found with the instrument, but massive bills were run up – and not, it seemed, by any of the employees. When records of the calls made were checked (bottom) it was discovered that someone – or some*thing* – had been making persistent calls to the speaking clock. The odd thing was that more calls were made than it was physically possible to dial in the time available. What could be making them?



Between 7.42 and 7.57 a.m. on 20 October 1967, 46 telephone calls were registered to the speaking clock. Adam further pointed out that although at least 17 seconds are needed to dial and connect with the speaking clock, even if one does not wait to hear the time, the post office claimed that as many as six calls a minute had been made, and continued to send enormous bills. Nevertheless, on 31 October, they replaced the telephones again. This time, the dials were locked and only Herr Adam had a key.

This step made no difference, and on 8 November Herr Adam was extremely angry to receive another huge bill that did not correspond with the records at all. He issued an accusation – against person or persons unknown – of fraud or embezzlement; it began: 'For several months my telephone installation has been so disturbed that a regular telephone call is impossible.'

Addicted to the time

In the spring of 1975, Adam showed us a sheaf of statements from the post office in which 0119, the number of the speaking clock, appeared over and over again. 'In five weeks,' he said, 'the speaking clock has been connected between 500 and 600 times. In one day, 80 times. I was very angry with the post office; I even wanted to found an association for the protection of the subscriber.' However, Adam soon had disturbances of a different nature to deal with.

On 20 October 1967, the office lights suddenly went out with a bang. Herr Bauer, an electrician from Stern's, a local firm, was called in to repair them. He examined the lights and found that each fluorescent tube had been turned 90° in its socket and disconnected. He had finished replacing the tubes and put away his ladder when there was

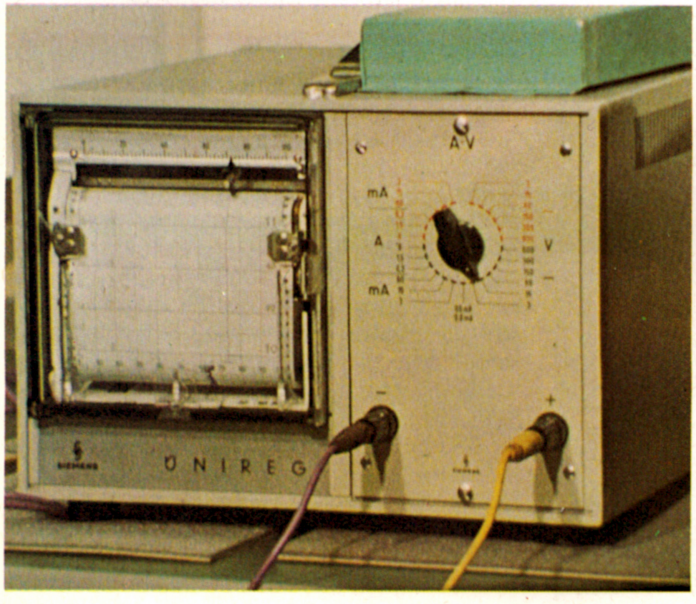
another bang. The tubes had twisted and disconnected themselves again. He was even more puzzled when the office staff told him that the automatic fuses in the office ejected themselves for no apparent reason, sometimes on all four circuits at once. Bauer began a full investigation of the office wiring and equipment, all of which he found in excellent order. He confessed to Adam: 'I was faced with a puzzle and called it "witchcraft".'

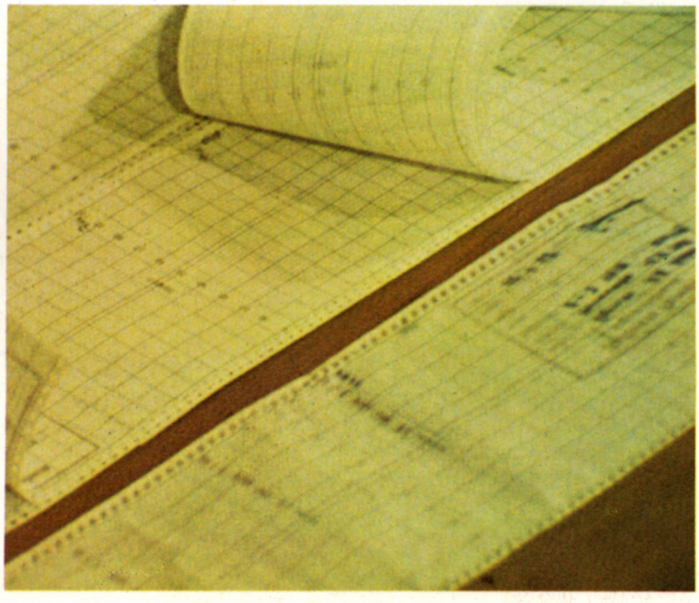
Since no fault could be found in the office, he concluded that something must be wrong with the electricity supply itself. The *Elektrizitätswerk* – German electricity board – was asked to take over the investigation. Accordingly, Paul Brunner, Auxiliary Works Manager, arrived at Adam's office on 15 November 1967.

Brunner is a small, dynamic man who impressed us with his authority and his

Right: Herr Adam at his desk

Below: the Unireg recorder (left) on which abnormalities in the electricity supply were detected and traced on a graph (right). At first the investigators thought that these were caused by the local electricity substation – but they found absolutely no faults there





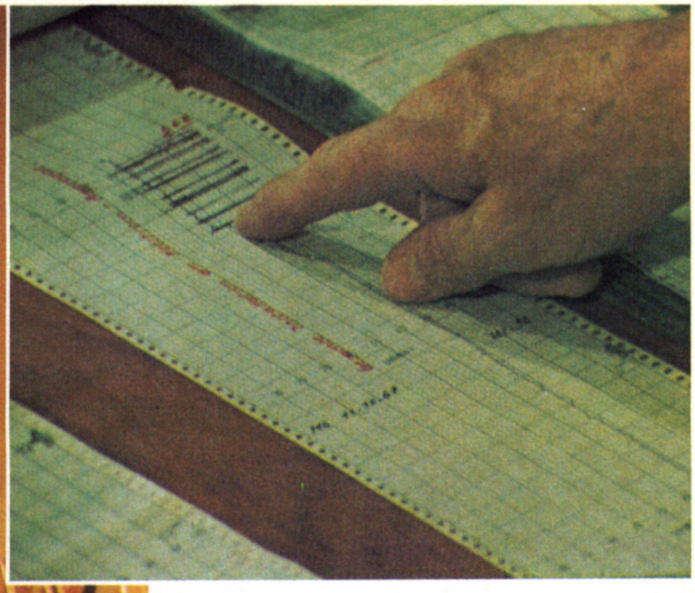
efficiency. He was born in Rosenheim and belonged to the second generation of his family to work at the electricity board. He told us that he had had no interest in the occult, but approached Adam's office with curiosity because of its scientific challenge – yet, ironically, the official report he prepared became one of the most significant documents in paranormal research.

The escalation of the Rosenheim phenomena can be seen when viewed chronologically. On Wednesday, 15 November 1967, extensive checks were run on the wiring and appliances at 13 Königstrasse, especially in Adam's flat. Everything was found to be satisfactory and short circuits were ruled out as a possible cause of the phenomena.

On Thursday, 16 November, a Siemans Unireg – an electrical instrument that shows voltage fluctuations on a single-track pen recorder – was installed at the office. Later a Tektronix plug-in unit with a storage oscilloscope was added, giving two more pen traces that showed fluctuations in the magnetic field and the noise level. A pen recorder gave a continuous read-out of current and voltage variations at selected points in the office circuitry, and the times at which they happened. The machine was sealed to prevent tampering. Over the next few weeks, it was established that abnormal deflections on the paper record occurred, but only in office hours and never at weekends. The automatic fuses were replaced with screw-in types and, to rule out trickery, these were also sealed.

On Monday, 20 November, after a 'normal' morning of twisting tubes, inexplicable voltage variations and bangs, a fluorescent tube in Adam's private office fell to the floor and shattered. At the same moment, a huge surge in the electric current – 50 amps – was registered, yet the safety fuses did not blow. On examining the read-out, Brunner was puzzled to see loops instead of the expected straight lines. Other tubes fell as the day wore on.

On Tuesday, 21 November, as a safety measure, all the fluorescent tubes in the office were replaced by normal light bulbs. More loud bangs were heard, and the photocopier



began leaking chemicals. It was plugged in but not switched on. Brunner wondered if electricity were being conducted into the building through gas and water mains. The team ran a number of tests – and this possibility, too, was ruled out.

On Wednesday, 22 November, the light bulbs began to explode. The neighbourhood was searched for freak power sources. None was found.

On Thursday, 23 November, the office apartment was disconnected from the electricity mains and was connected directly by cable to the transformer, High Tension Station K11 in Königstrasse.

On Friday, 24 November, Brunner thought the mystery was over. He found full deflections on the paper record, some so savage that the paper had been torn by the pen. As the meter was connected directly to K11, he thought the fault had to be there in the supply itself, and that his team had been correct in pronouncing all the electrical equipment in the office satisfactory. With relief, engineers, equipment and cable were evacuated from the office and camp was set up at K11, to pinpoint the fault. But no fault was found. Camp was reinstated at the office.

The entire supply grid of Rosenheim was checked and pronounced sound.

On Monday, 27 November, a girl was cut by flying glass from an exploding light bulb. All remaining bulbs were covered by nylon bags to prevent further accidents. Four more exploded that afternoon. Between five and six o'clock, an alarming new development forced Brunner to admit that he was dealing with something outside his experience: the lights began to swing.

The next few days were spent observing swinging lamps and trying to find an explanation for their movement: 'We leapt repeatedly up and down the floor overhead to try to make the lamps swing – without success. The traffic outside was also watched carefully, and tests were made for electrostatic charges, but none was found.'

On Thursday, 30 November, the office was severed from the mains, and power supplied instead by a 7-kilowatt generator-truck parked outside. The generator's meter showed a steady 220-volt output, yet inside the office deflections and crashes continued, lamps swung, bulbs exploded and fuses were ejected erratically.

On Thursday, 7 December, over 90 deflections were registered during the morning. Lamps swung so violently that they smashed against the ceiling, denting the plaster.

Above: Herr Adam inspects one of the lamps that began to swing wildly on 27 November 1967. The lamp on the office landing moved as much as 22 inches (55 centimetres) from its normal position

Above right: one of the more violent deflections of the trace on the Unireg recorder. No physical reason could be found for the disturbances in the electricity supply – though they did occur only during office hours, suggesting that someone on the staff was somehow responsible

Paintings begin to twirl

To vindicate his methods and results, and to safeguard his reputation, Brunner asked the advice of Dr Karger of the Max Planck Institute of Plasma Physics, and Dr Zicha of Munich University, two of Germany's most eminent physicists. Following a suggestion from Karger, Brunner disconnected the office supply from the Unireg and placed an ordinary 1.5-volt battery across the Unireg terminals. To the astonishment of everyone,

instead of registering 1.5 volts until the battery exhausted its charge, the pen began its trace at 3 volts and then zig-zagged wildly across the paper. The Unireg (which was in perfect working order) could not be monitoring the battery to which it was connected.

On Monday, 11 December, at 8.45 a.m., Brunner and his assistant, Mayr, were chatting together in the typists' office, when suddenly a painting twisted on its hook. Surprised, Brunner stretched out his hand to straighten the picture. Other paintings in the room started to rotate, some falling to the floor. The typists, who later said they had felt unusually tense that morning, were rooted to their desks with fear, but Mayr and Brunner stationed themselves at vantage points to observe this new phenomenon. They saw the first painting to move turn through 320°, its string wrapping itself round its hook.

At this point, Brunner, realising that he was out of his depth, prepared to wind up the experiments and wrote his official report. In it, he was relieved to point out the excellent state of Rosenheim's electricity supply, which had been thoroughly checked – to even Herr Adam's satisfaction; yet inexplicable voltage deflections still occurred in the office:

> It became necessary to postulate the existence of a power hitherto unknown to technology, of which neither the nature nor strength nor direction could be defined. It is an energy quite beyond our comprehension.

Alarmed by the thought that there was no apparent way of controlling this mysterious and often harmful energy, Brunner handed over the investigations to the physicists who had been monitoring the experiments.

Like Brunner, Dr Karger and Dr Zicha were fascinated by the scientific challenge of explaining the electrical disturbances in Adam's office, and they carried out an independent investigation using the most sophisticated equipment. They concentrated on finding the cause of the deflections on the meter, installing probes to examine voltage levels, magnetic fields and sound levels. Their questions and answers can be summarised as follows.

1. Were the deflections accompanied by voltage surges? *No, voltage remained constant.*
2. Were the disturbances caused by high-frequency voltage transmission from outside the office? *None measured and none found.*
3. An electrostatic charge? *No.*
4. A static magnetic field? *None detected.*
5. Loose contact in the measuring equipment's amplifier? *None found. A second machine also showed the same anomalies.*
6. Ultrasonic or infrasonic vibrations? *None found.*
7. Manual interference? *Fraud and trickery impossible.*

While measuring sound levels, they noticed that, although no sound was heard, their monitor showed a huge deflection, so they concluded that there must have been direct pressure on the crystal in the microphone. They speculated that a similar invisible force could be acting on the pen of the Unireg itself, causing the unnatural loops directly, independently of the electric current. They speculated further: the same force could be acting on the tiny springs inside the telephone, bypassing the dial. It was active only for short periods, its nature was complex and it was not electrodynamic. Known physics could not explain it.

Herr Adam sits pensively in front of the painting that turned, by itself, through almost a complete circle – to the terror of the watching office staff

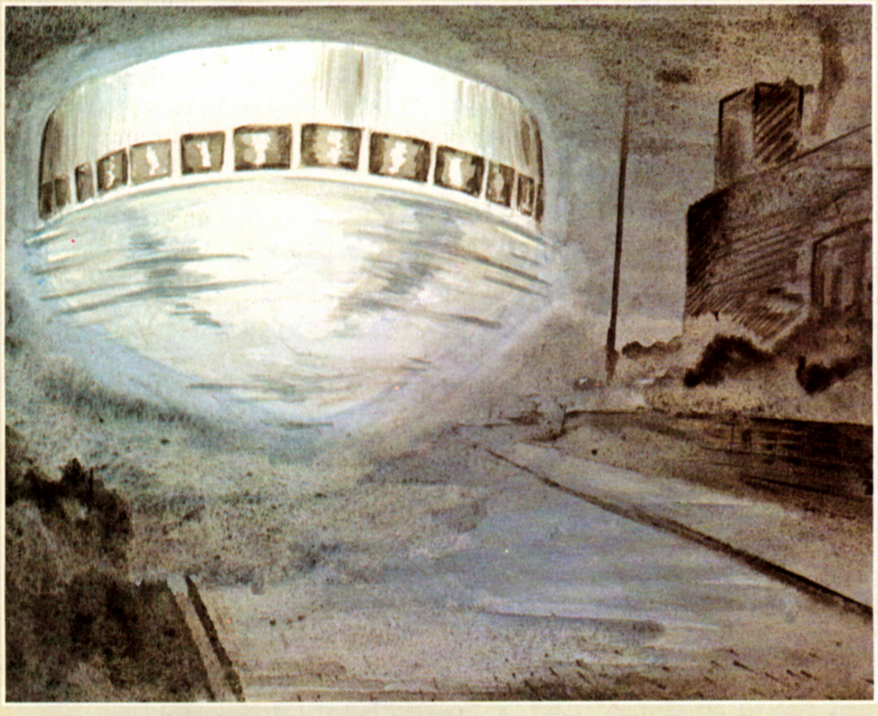
A fugitive intelligence

Karger and Zicha also felt that the telephone anomalies suggested that an intelligent force was at work, because it had 'chosen' to focus its attention on the speaking clock. It was clear that the force resisted investigation, and this was another reason to speculate on the existence of an intelligence avoiding scrutiny. They prepared their report and left.

As the physicists left Adam's office, teams of investigators from other scientific fields were eager to take their place, including Professor Hans Bender from the Freiburg Institute, who began his experiments in mid December. He was joined by several policemen who had come as a result of Adam's exasperated accusation 'Against person or persons unknown', and independently these new investigators began gathering evidence. The physicists had left two important clues. First, they had suspected that a rational being was behind the phenomena and second, they confirmed that the 'poltergeist' was active in office hours only. Investigations were now centred on the office staff, Johannes Engelhard, Frau Bielmeier (the part-time assistant) and the two clerks, 17-year-old Gustel Huber and 18-year-old Annemarie Schneider.

Who was responsible for the poltergeist phenomena – and for what reason? *See page 1566*

Alien spacecraft, hallucinations or fraud? The theories about UFO contact cases are legion. JENNY RANDLES assesses each explanation and concludes that the phenomenon lies outside our usual categories of thought



Stranger than fiction

ALIENS BEINGS MUST EXIST – somewhere in the Universe, in some form or other. Of this there is little doubt. The problem confronting us is whether the evidence we possess proves that some of these aliens are visiting the Earth now. If this is so, then proving the fact would be of the utmost significance. It would be perhaps the most momentous occasion in the history of the world.

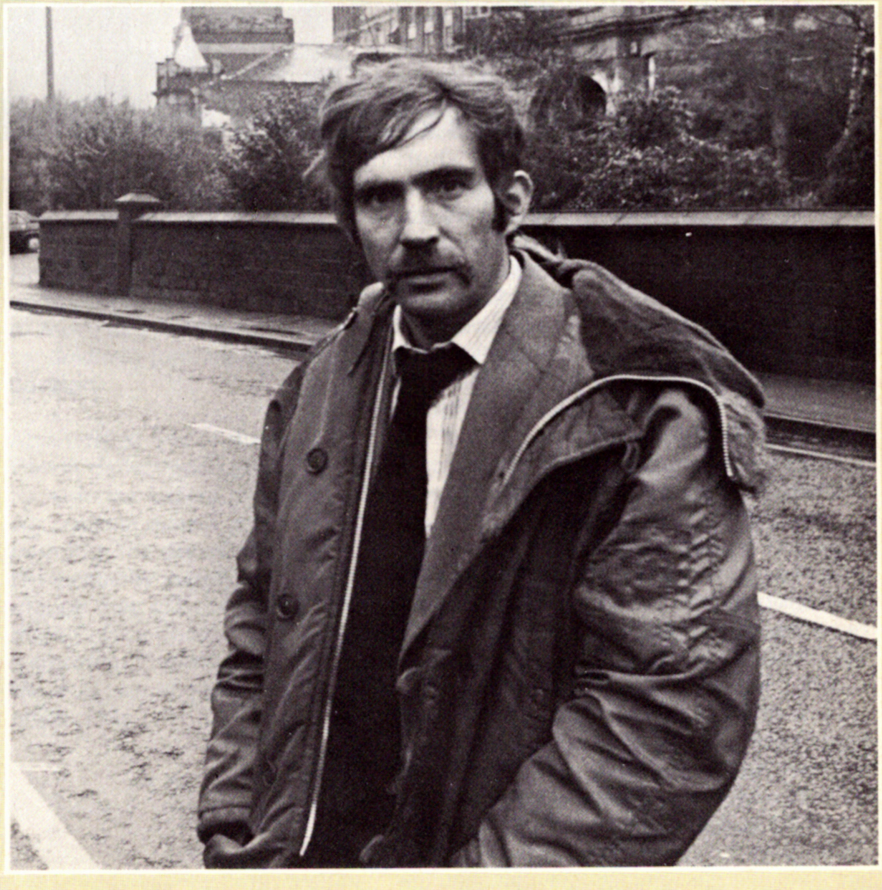
But we do not possess photographs, movie films or tape recordings of aliens, or artefacts manufactured on another world . . . anything that goes beyond mere testimony. In view of this paucity of hard evidence we can hardly say, with any definiteness, whether aliens are or are not visiting us. We can only make a reasoned assessment of the facts.

The dilemmas posed by close encounters of the fourth kind are starkly illustrated by a case that occurred in the north of England on 28 November 1980. Police Constable Alan Godfrey had been called out to pursue some cows that were allegedly roaming a housing estate. By 5.15 a.m., still not having found them, he was ready to give up the search. While making one last trip in his patrol car before coming off duty, he saw a glow on the road ahead. He instantly thought of a works bus that regularly travelled the route and idly wondered why it was a little early. Then, as he approached the glow, it became obvious that he had been wrong.

The object that confronted PC Godfrey was like a spinning top with windows. It was hovering just above the road surface, spanning the gap between two lamp posts, and it was rotating. He could see his headlights reflected in the metallic surface of the object. He could see leaves on the roadside bushes moving in the vortex created by its rotation. The road surface, soaking wet in other places, was dry in blotchy patches directly beneath the object. There was no doubt in his mind that the object was real.

Maintaining the traditional calm of the British 'bobby', the officer propped his clipboard on the windscreen and carefully sketched the object. But then something inexplicable happened. He suddenly found himself further down the road, driving the car away from the scene. Nonplussed, he turned the car round and drove past the spot, now deserted, where the object had been. He carried on the short distance into town and collected a colleague. Only at this point did he notice the time. Somewhere, since the moment he first saw the UFO, 10 minutes had disappeared.

Constable Godfrey had a dim memory, however – of a strange voice saying: 'This is not for your eyes. You will forget it.' Additional fragmentary recollections gradually



filtered back to him until, nine months after the incident, and with the help of ufologists, he underwent regression hypnosis. This was conducted by an eminently qualified and rather sceptical psychiatrist, and what appeared to be a coherent memory of the incident emerged.

The story was of the usual type: the officer had been taken on board the UFO and given a medical examination by two distinct types of humanoid creature – one tall, the other small and somewhat ugly. Remarkably, this is almost exactly what the Day family claimed happened to them during their abduction at Aveley in Essex (see page 1481). In fact, contact cases reported from Britain share such similarities in many features. Cases reported from other countries, on the other hand, show different similarities among themselves.

What happened to the police constable? Is he lying to us? If not, did he have an hallucination or did he undergo the events he described? Or was it something between hallucination and straightforward experience – a distortion or misinterpretation of some extraordinary events?

There happens to be unusual and powerful support for the 'face-value' interpretation of the story. Four police officers on patrol 8 miles (13 kilometres) away had to duck as a UFO streaked low over their heads, moving directly towards the town near which the encounter took place. And a caretaker lighting a school's boilers saw in the direction of the town an object that fitted PC Godfrey's description, climbing into the sky. These stories were reported independently while the police officer was still reporting what he had just observed.

When faced with an issue like this, most people take sharply contrasting attitudes. Some would want to believe that aliens were involved. Others would deny that this was possible, and would cling to the hallucination theory. Unfortunately these two hypotheses have points both in their favour and against them. So let us survey some of the difficulties that the various answers face.

Why do aliens look like us? Why do they behave like us? Why do they mirror our social and scientific developments? Why do they never tell us anything valuable to which we do not already have access? These problems are curiously like those involved in alleged memories of past lives, spirit messages and other demonstrations of survival of death. It is surely not without significance that the common factor in these cases is the frequent use of regression hypnosis and the role of the human mind. Taken together, these facts suggest a mental origin for these strange experiences.

Left: in the north of England a craft resembling a spinning top hovers above a road. The witness – a police constable. Later he recalled an experience of being taken aboard the craft and examined by terrifying creatures

Below left: Alan Godfrey, the police constable who believes he was taken aboard an alien craft in November 1980, standing at the scene of the incident. The ufonauts who abducted him included, he said, eight small 'robots'

Between waking and sleep

To this type of evidence we should add research into lucid dreams. These are dreams in which the dreamer knows he is dreaming (see page 588). Often the course of the dream can be controlled by conscious effort. Such dreams are rare and seem to overlap with such phenomena as hypnagogic imagery (the images, often compellingly 'real', that come when we are between waking and sleep).

Although they seem so real at the time, lucid dreams and hypnagogic images give away their 'unreal' nature in various subtle hints. For example, the subject does not react with normal responses. He may feel no fear, despite the weirdness of the experience. He will not wake up a sleeping bed partner to witness the events. In one case a person had such an experience, in which he thought an atomic bomb had just exploded in his garden. His response was to yawn and fall asleep. The behaviour of contact case witnesses is often like this.

Interestingly, such symptoms also occur in hallucinations that follow long periods of sensory deprivation. When a person is kept in darkness and silence, and even his sense of touch is deprived of its normal stimulation because his hands are enveloped in special gloves, his mind starts to manufacture its own 'perceptions' – hallucinations of sound, sight and touch. When we consider the usual setting of a type C contact – night-time, a tired driver, a lonely country road, and the sudden appearance of a slightly unusual sight, such as a bright light in the sky – it does not stretch credulity very far to suggest that these could be hallucinations brought about by the lack of sensory stimulation.

In the USA Dr Alvin Lawson, a professor of

Words of wisdom

Surveying 16 years of editing *Flying Saucer Review*, Charles Bowen, a contributor to *The Unexplained*, commented on the rich absurdities of the UFO occupants' messages. In 1968 in Argentina two 'men' with transparent legs gave a farmer's son a written message that may be rendered as: 'You shall know the world. F. Saucer.' In 1965 in Venezuela two beings 7 to 8 feet (2.1 to 2.4 metres) tall, with long yellow hair and protruding eyes, were asked whether there were 'any human beings like you living among us?' The answer was: 'Yes. 2,417,805.' (Surely one of them will be spotted soon!) During the 1954 'flap' a French witness encountered a small being standing before a glowing disc-shaped craft. The alien repeated several times in a 'mechanical' voice: '*La veritée est refusée aux constipés*,' and: '*Ce que vous appelez cancer vient des dents.*' Translated, these messages from another civilisation read: 'Truth is denied to the constipated' (or: 'to the ill at ease'), and: 'That which is known as cancer comes from the teeth' (or: 'through what you eat').

We can't say we weren't warned.

The trouble with hypnosis

In 1977 Professor Alvin Lawson began to investigate the validity of UFO abduction reports obtained under hypnosis. He hypnotised a total of 16 volunteers who knew very little about UFOs. Once in trance, they were asked to imagine a series of events – seeing a UFO, being taken on board, given an examination and so on. Lawson hoped to find differences between their imaginary accounts and those given by alleged UFO contactees. Such differences would enhance the credibility of the 'real' reports.

To his surprise, it was the similarities that were most striking. For example, among his test subjects' narratives were descriptions of 'tubes of light', which extended from UFOs or retracted into them, perhaps 'levitating' the subject aboard. Sometimes the subject described the UFO as 'getting bigger and smaller'. And patterns of pulsating colours, rotating spirals and geometric patterns were often reported. All these features are common in 'real' UFO reports, but they are rare in science fiction stories and films, a likely source of UFO imagery.

The experiments showed that authentic-sounding reports could be produced in abundance by subjects who have never claimed to have been abducted by a UFO. Dr Lawson concluded that contact case witnesses were not lying – but he could offer no hypothesis as to the nature of the stimulus causing their experience.

English at the University of California, has conducted experiments that are relevant to the hallucination theory. He advertised for people of a 'creative' turn of mind to take part in an unspecified experiment. He screened out all those who seemed to have a knowledge of, or interest in, UFOs. The rest were asked to imagine, under hypnosis, that they were being abducted by aliens. They were led on with certain key questions, and the results, he claimed, were so closely akin to the stories told of allegedly real abductions that it was likely that these also were, wholly or in part, subconscious fantasies.

These different types of evidence constitute impressive support for the contention that alien contacts are hallucinatory. But unfortunately there is a fair amount of negative evidence too. Some contact experiences are shared; while collective hallucinations can occur, they are not well-understood, and some encounters stretch this hypothesis to breaking point. One Italian type A case involved seven witnesses; one British type A involved four. In some cases, such as those in Puerto Rico and that involving the English police officer, there is at least some degree of *independent* corroboration.

Alvin Lawson's work, as he himself recognised, showed major differences between allegedly real abductions and imagined ones, as well as similarities. When, in a UFO contact case, memories emerge by way of hypnosis, they are almost invariably associated with very strong emotions, more consistent with the memory of a real event than a fantasy. The 'abductions' imagined in the laboratory did not display this effect, and in general those who took part in the experiment knew afterwards that they had been fantasising. Contact witnesses are never in any doubt that their regression memory is of a real event. It can still be argued, of course, that the remembered event, though real, is purely 'mental' – an hallucination or dream.

We must also consider the frequent reports of physical effects on a witness's body,

Right: more outlandish than most descriptions of aliens provided by UFO contactees: Alpha Centauri, a well-dressed science fiction monster from the television series *Dr Who*. 'Real' ufonauts are far more similar to human beings – or to gnomes, giants, dwarves and other 'traditional' mythical creatures

Left: two high officials of the Draconian race – another instance of the television designer's imagination outstripping the diversity of reported aliens. Animal forms, or hybrid animal-human forms like these, might be expected among ufonauts – whether they were genuinely extra-terrestrial or the products of the human imagination. In fact, both 'real' accounts and 'imaginary' ones produced under laboratory conditions are seldom of this type

such as burns on the skin. Marks on the ground sometimes accompany these cases as well. But, on the other hand, there is almost no photographic support for the contact witnesses' stories – and physical effects can be produced psychosomatically.

Looking at more subtle features of the accounts, considerable consistency and a kind of lucid cohesiveness appear in all but the type B 'bedroom visitor' cases. This tends to make the UFO investigator doubt that he is dealing with experiences more akin to dreams than reality.

It is very difficult to sort out these contradictory elements. Perhaps the fairest judgement we can make at present is to say that type B experiences *seem* more like vivid hallucinations than reality. Type C ('memory block') cases have elements suggesting hallucinations but, unlike type B experiences, offer some data that cast doubt on this assumption. If type C cases are indeed hallucinations, they seem to be of a unique type – almost a hybrid between dream and reality. As for the most common contact cases, type A, they are the least like hallucinations. While they are full of problems, we cannot explain them as hallucinations with any degree of confidence.

What of the other extreme? Are these contacts extra-terrestrial in nature? This, the 'face-value' hypothesis, implies that hundreds of different races (most of them not very imaginative variants on ourselves), from many different worlds, are taking a great deal of interest in the Earth. They perform medical examinations interminably, and gather up endless cargoes of soil and rock samples. For no apparent reason the Earth is the Galaxy's Grand Central Station.

The sceptics invariably ask why the aliens don't contact someone important. Why not land on the White House lawn and thus dispel all doubts?

Gaynor Sunderland (see page 1188) asked Arna, one of the aliens she claimed to have met, this very question. She was told that people in authority had so much credibility to lose that there was no point in contacting them, although this had been tried on a few occasions. Fear of the consequences kept such people silent. Instead the aliens pursue a policy of contacting children or simple folk, knowing that some of these will brave the ridicule and speak out.

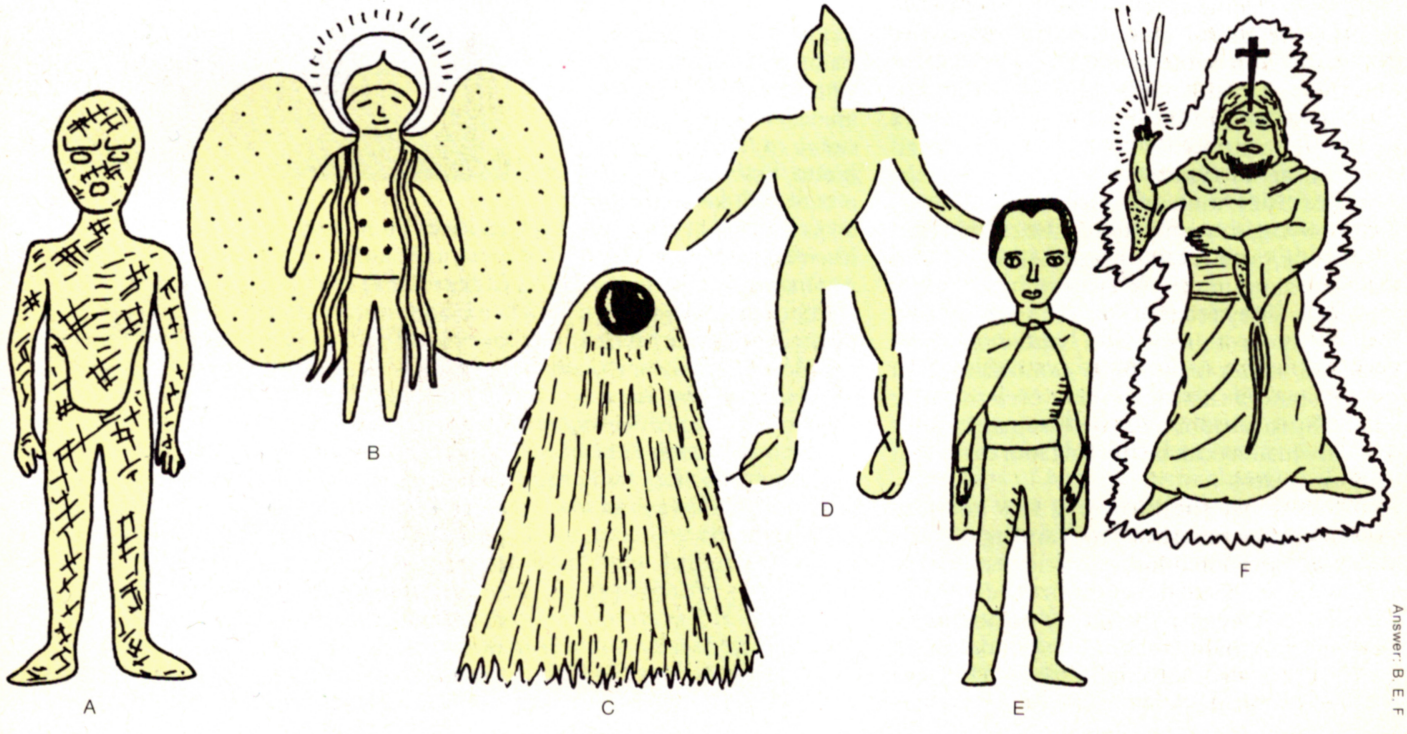
This argument makes an intriguing amount of sense. Widespread belief in the existence of alien life is the only tangible result of decades of UFO stories. A slow, covert process of conditioning world opinion to the idea of extra-terrestrial visitors fits well with the 'provocative but not probative' evidence that we possess. Solid proof would be detrimental to such a policy: it would be impounded, or hidden, or denied outright. Suggestive indications, on the other hand, avoid the unwelcome attention of authority while providing a stimulus to continued interest and promoting the long, slow build-up of belief. Even the confusing and ridiculous behaviour of the aliens would fit this theory. In the end the only people who will not be convinced that aliens come from space will be the UFO investigators themselves!

A great deal of fascinating work remains before we can hope to know the truth. There is no hard evidence that a superior intelligence has made contact with the Earth – but we do have suggestive hints that this *might* be true. And, since most of us would wish UFOs to come from space, our judgement is clouded by an enormous emotional bias.

Further reading

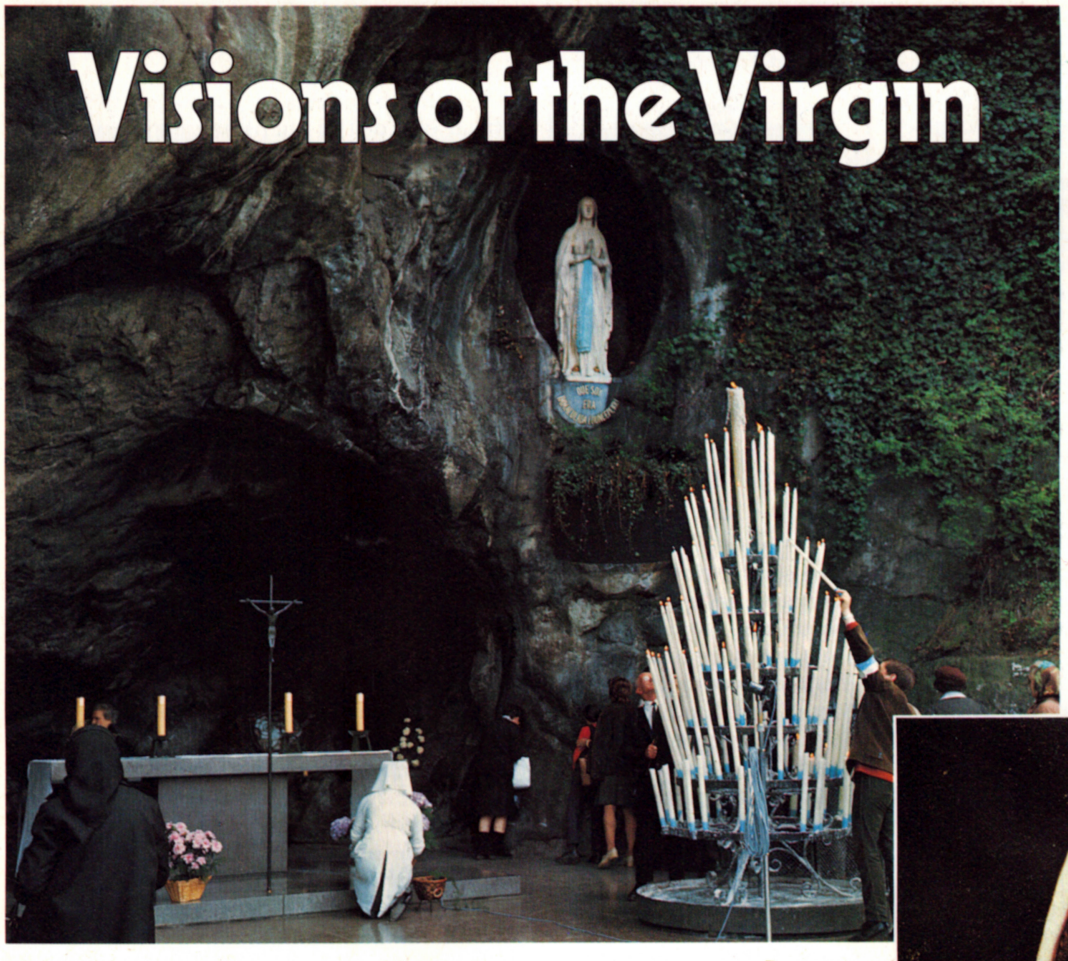
Charles Bowen (ed.), *The humanoids*, Futura 1974
Jenny Randles and Paul Whetnall, *Alien contact*, Neville Spearman 1981
D. Scott Rogo, *UFO abductions*, New American Library 1980

Of the six drawings below, three were made by witnesses in UFO contact cases, and were offered as *bona fide* representations of alien beings. The others were made by participants in Alvin Lawson's 'simulated abduction' experiments. These subjects, though they produced their accounts under hypnosis, were never in doubt about the imaginary nature of their experiences. Is there a different 'feel' about the two types of drawing? Can you pick out the three 'real' contact witness drawings? The answer is printed at the lower right



Answer: B, E, F

Visions of the Virgin



Right: Joan of Arc being inspired by an angel to lead the French to victory against the English. 'The Maid', as she was known, heard voices that urged her to forsake the normal life of a peasant girl and become a soldier – and on at least one occasion she claimed to have seen St Michael himself. Her voices, however, seemed to have let her down badly, for her victories were few and transitory – and she died horribly at the stake. For this reason many commentators have suggested that her inspiration was diabolical in origin

For centuries believers have reported having experienced a vision of the Virgin Mary – and miracles of prophecy and healing have followed. KEVIN McCLURE discusses the stories of some world-famous visions

HISTORY IS FULL of visions. Visions that have led great men to do great things, and evil men to do evil things. Visitations from non-material figures led Joan of Arc to fight for France, and allegedly caused the Yorkshire Ripper to murder prostitutes. A researcher who looks for long enough can find visions of almost every kind – angels, demons, cities, monsters, heaven, hell, elves, fairies, flying saucers, saints, lovers, the dead and dying, and many more. Most of these visions are unique; seen once only, or rarely repeated. They relate only to the person who sees them, or to the place where they are seen, or to an individual combination of circumstances that is unlikely ever to occur again. Such visions may be fascinating, but few conclusions can be drawn from cases that vary so widely.

There are, though, a very few kinds of vision that are reported again and again, and show marked signs of repetition and consistency. There may be a variety of reasons for this, but if a large number of unconnected individuals claim a similar experience, we must begin to take them seriously, and wonder whether there is more to it than illusion or imagination. Does the figure or person that is reportedly seen have some independent reality of his or her own?

Above: the grotto at Lourdes, France, where Bernadette Soubirous (right) had a vision of a beautiful lady who later said: 'I am the Immaculate Conception.' The statue of the lady in the grotto, however, reportedly provoked Bernadette to comment that it bore little resemblance to her vision. Although Bernadette herself died in agony from a tubercular knee in 1879, Lourdes has become a place of pilgrimage and many alleged miraculous healings. The sick and dying flock in great numbers (top, far right) to bathe in the water of the Lourdes grotto

The vision most frequently seen and experienced in the Western world in the past 800 years is that of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ. There have been numerous variations in detail – in age, exact appearance, clothing, and companions – but the overall picture is remarkably consistent. And consistent, too, are the reports of healing and prophecy that often accompany the visions. Clearly, a pattern has been established, and some elements of the reports must be seen as the consequence of expectation and belief. But it does seem that there may be more to it than that – certainly, people's lives have been changed, often for the better, by what is

said to have been seen.

The number of visions reported must run into thousands, and is constantly increasing. By presenting eight separate cases, some famous, some less so, that have occurred in Europe and the USA in the last 150 years, a general impression of this fascinating field, at least, will be given.

La Salette is a small village in the French Alps, in the region of Grenoble. Here, on 18 September 1846, something of a pattern was set for visions of the Virgin. Two children, 15-year-old Melanie Calvat and 11-year-old Maximin Giraud, tending their herd of cows in a remote spot, saw a weeping woman, who seemed to be resting on the bed of a dried-up stream. She rose and said, 'Why do you not come nearer my children? Be not frightened. I have come to tell you some great news.' The two children described the woman as utterly radiant, 'brighter than the sun, but not to be compared with it'. She wore a long, sequined, white robe, with a white, patterned scarf, a yellow apron, and white, pearl-studded shoes. She wore a cross on her breast that shone with its own brilliance. Rays of light darted from her. Overcoming their fear, the children listened to the radiant figure. She predicted famine, and illness before it; that the grape and potato crops would rot. She complained bitterly of the distress caused her by the sins of the people, and is said to have given secret information, which was passed to Pope Pius IX in 1850.

As was often the case, priests and people alike were unwilling to believe the children's story at first, and they suffered threats, persuasion and – apparently – physical injury. But they did not retract their claims, and argued plausibly for what they had seen. The stream the children had seen to be dry flowed with water the next day; but, as predicted, the potato crops failed, causing famine in France and Ireland; philoxera destroyed the vineyards. The claims of the children at La Salette have never been completely refuted.

Bernadette's lady

The events at Lourdes, where a 14-year-old girl experienced 18 visions of the Virgin, are far better known. Films, plays, books and television have dealt repeatedly with the story of the small French town that has become the centre of so many hopes – and, sometimes, of seemingly miraculous healings. The image of the religious peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, collecting driftwood, seeing the Virgin, speaking with her, and watching the healing spring bursting forth from the ground are now the stuff of legend. But we should look a little closer at the vision itself, through an English translation of Bernadette's own account:

> I looked up and saw a cluster of branches and brambles underneath the highest opening of the grotto, tossing and swinging to and fro, although nothing else stirred.
>
> Behind these branches and inside the opening, I saw at that moment a girl in white, no bigger than myself, who greeted me with a slight bow of her head. . . . She was wearing a white dress right down to her feet and only the tips of her toes were showing. The dress was gathered high at the neck from which there hung a white cord. A white veil covered her head and came down over her shoulders and arms almost to the bottom of her dress. On each foot I saw a yellow rose. The sash of her dress was blue and hung down below her knees. The chain of the

rosary was yellow, the beads white and big, and widely spaced. The girl was alive, very young and surrounded with light. When I had finished my rosary she bowed to me smilingly. She retired within the niche, and suddenly disappeared.

This was all the communication that took place during the first vision; not until 25 March 1858 did the figure pronounce itself to be 'The Immaculate Conception' – a description and doctrine, oddly enough, defined by the Pope only four years previously. The visions continued until 16 July 1858, although the first healing miracle apparently occurred as early as 7 April. Clearly some confusion has arisen as to facts. Bernadette declared the figure she saw was 'no bigger than myself' – that is, a child, far from full-grown. Also, Bernadette did not at first give the figure a religious title, but referred to it merely as 'Aquero', meaning 'this thing'. As she had contact with a priest who believed strongly in the vision at La Salette, it is perhaps not surprising that in time she identified the figure as Mary, and that history has turned the child seen by Bernadette into the full-grown Mother of Christ. But this does not detract from the significance of the original experience, nor from the healings that seem to have been a direct result of Bernadette's vision.

By the mid 19th century, visions of the Virgin were becoming increasingly common all over Europe. Away from the visions of mainland Europe – and different in other ways too – were the events at Knock, County Mayo in the Republic of Ireland, on the evening of 21 August 1879. The scene on the outer wall of the chapel in this remote village was described by the local *Tuam News*:

> The first person who saw it passed on, but others soon came and remained, and these saw covering a large portion of the gable end of the sacristy, an altar, and to its sides the figures of St John the Evangelist, the Blessed Virgin, and St Joseph . . . . the altar was surrounded by a brilliant golden light through which, up and down, angels seemed to be flitting . . . . To St John's right, the Blessed Virgin, having her hands extended and raised towards her shoulders, the palms of her hands turned towards the people, and her eyes raised up towards heaven . . . . These figures remained visible from 7.30 p.m. to 10 p.m., witnessed during that time by about twenty persons. . . .

Here, the Virgin is said to have worn a white dress and golden crown.

Top: the gable end of the church at Knock, County Mayo in Eire, where a paranormal altar, surrounded by the figures of the Virgin and other saints, was seen in August 1879. The two-dimensional quality of the reported vision has led sceptics to suggest that the 'vision' was in fact the projected image of a magic lantern show

Above: Pope John Paul addresses the faithful at the new basilica at Knock in 1979

The physical nature of the Knock visions – flat, two-dimensional against a wall, statue-like and motionless in all essentials, surrounded by light, and growing brighter as night fell – has led to suspicions that the 'vision' was in fact an image cast by a magic lantern, or even phosphorescent paint on the wall. However, these rationalisations would seem unlikely to fool so many people for so long; but no other wholly conventional explanation has been put forward. Whatever the vision may have been – and we shall almost certainly never know now – it was clearly believable and convincing for those who saw it, and it had a tremendous effect. It occurred at a time of poverty, hardship and dispute, and regardless of its source it met a need. The scene of regular papal visits, the shrine at Knock now attracts over a million visitors a year. The vision communicated nothing, but a 'limestone broth' was made of

plaster from the church wall mixed with holy water; it was administered to the sick, and claims of its healing powers were frequent.

Of the eight visionary events reviewed in this series, the apparitions at Llanthony are perhaps the most outlandish, occurring as they did in an Anglo-Catholic religious community. There was clearly some expectation of contact with the Divine, and in several ways the events followed a pattern.

The Virgin comes to Wales

The apparitions occurred in the grounds of the monastery at Llanthony Abbey, Capel-y-Fin, Wales, between 30 August and 15 September 1880. The community was very varied in composition, and was founded and led by the eccentric and remarkable Joseph Leycester Lyne, known as Father Ignatius. Following the appearance of a ghostly sacrament to a Sister Janet that morning, in the twilight of the evening of 30 August 1880 four boys of the community, aged between 9 and 15, claim to have witnessed a vision of the Virgin.

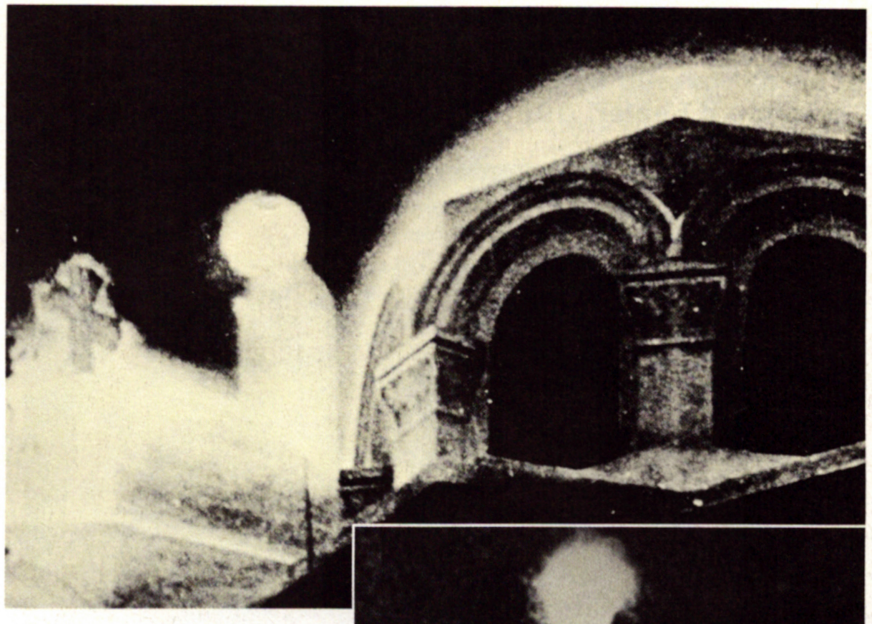
> A halo of glory shone out from the figure all around in an oval form. The form was of a woman, a veil hung over the head and face, the hands were both raised as if in blessing. It approached very slowly. Its appearance was like the pictures of 'The Immaculate Conception' . . . . They saw the beautiful form enter the hedge, and after remaining there in the light for a few minutes, passed through the bush and vanished.

On Saturday, 4 September, in response to the singing of the 'Ave Maria', a light in the same bush developed into 'the form of a woman surrounded by light . . . the face and head covered with the veil'. Then, 'In the light appeared the form of a man, unclothed save a cloth round the loins . . . as the forms met, both vanished.'

The climactic event of the series occurred on 15 September, when four persons had a brief, remarkable experience after singing a number of Ave's. They started to sing one in honour of the Blessed Virgin:

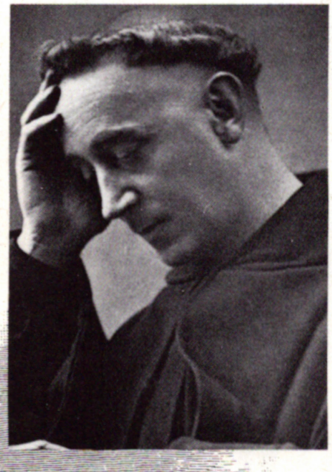
> We had no sooner begun it than the whole heavens and mountains broke forth in bulging circles of light, circles pushing out from circles – the light poured upon our faces and the buildings where we stood, and in the central circle stood a most Majestic Heavenly Form, robed in flowing drapery. The Form was gigantic, but seemed to be reduced to human size as it approached. The figure stood sideways, facing the Holy Bush. The vision was most distinct and the details were very clear; but it was 'in the twinkling of an eye'.

Visions of the Virgin are rare in Britain and the accounts and claims of the Llanthony residents have been criticised – but they have never been disproved. There have also been reports of healing that was apparently effected with leaves of the Holy Bush, which is actually wild rhubarb.



Above and right: the vision of the Virgin as it floated over the Coptic orthodox church of St Mary at Zeitoun, Egypt, in 1968

Below: Father Ignatius, present at Llanthony Abbey, Wales (bottom), when the Virgin is said to have appeared in 1880



What has the Virgin allegedly prophesied in the 20th century? See page 1594

Psychic events have been linked with Matthew Manning for years but it was during a trip to India in the late 1970s that he discovered how his powers could be channelled: he became a healer. GUY LYON PLAYFAIR investigates

Matthew Manning's healing gift

BY 1977, MATTHEW MANNING had spent an interesting life by any standards. He had been a poltergeist victim, an automatic writer and artist (see page 390), a metal bender and a ghost hunter. He had experienced astral projection, seen human auras, and guessed ESP-testing Zener cards with almost 100 per cent accuracy, and he had enabled scientists in several countries to examine his many unusual skills. He had also attracted considerable media publicity, and written two books. And he was still only 21.

Yet the career of international psychic superstar was not for him. He gave up automatic writing and drawing and stopped bending metal. Such activities, he felt, served no useful purpose except, as he puts it, as 'flowers to attract people's attention'. But, he insists, 'the roots are far more important. They are what we can learn from.' And his own determination to get at the roots of psi led him into an entirely new career – healing.

Above: Matthew Manning, the poltergeist victim, psychic artist, metal bender and author who has now learned to channel his extraordinary powers to heal others

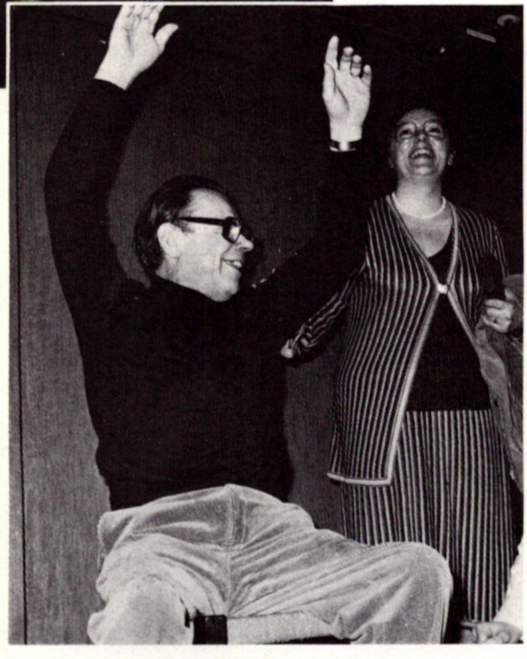
It began with a lengthy series of tests he carried out in 1977 and early 1978 at the Mind Science Foundation in San Antonio, Texas, the University of California at Davis, and the Washington Research Center in San Francisco. Dr William Braud, who supervised the Texas research, announced in the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research (December 1979) that 'Matthew Manning was able to exert significant psychokinetic influences upon a variety of biological systems.' Using a combination of a relaxation technique and visualisation, he was able to influence the activity of gerbils, the orientation of electric fish, the haemolysis rate of human blood, and the electrical skin resistance of human subjects. In other words, it had been demonstrated under controlled conditions that mind can influence *living* matter to a significant degree.

In California, Manning found that his mind could also influence the minds, or at least the brains, of others. Under the supervision of Professor Loring Chapman, and

with Professor Fred Lorenz as subject, he was able to transmit states of arousal or sedation to order while both his and Lorenz's brainwave patterns were being recorded by an electroencephalograph (EEG). 'The correspondences between Matthew's EEG and my own were most dramatic,' Lorenz stated, and the implications of this experiment may be considered equally so.

A very important feature of Manning's laboratory experiments was that the more interested he was in the individual test, the better the results were likely to be. This was most evident when he attempted potentially the most important task of all – the destruction of cancer cells.

Working with Dr John Kmetz, of the Science Unlimited Research Foundation in San Antonio, Manning was apparently able to do this, either by laying his hands on the flask containing the cells or at a distance with no physical contact at all. In 30 experiments he achieved positive results 27 times, once increasing the cell death rate compared to the control sample by a staggering 1200 per cent. However, for reasons still not clear, Dr Kmetz did not publish a report on this experiment. Indeed, Manning estimates that for every published report of a successful experiment in which he takes part, at least 10 others remain unrecorded, for reasons known only to the researchers concerned. It would appear that some scientists, when faced with results they cannot explain, are unwilling to believe the evidence of their eyes and their instruments or to face the possible ridicule of their colleagues. It could also be that they are reluctant to face the implications of their own discoveries.



Above left: a demonstration of healing in Freiburg, West Germany, in February 1981. Friedrich Landenberger, who suffered from advanced osteo-arthritis in both shoulders and found it impossible to raise his arms, submitted to a medical examination by Dr Ripprich of Freiburg and an English doctor (who wished to remain anonymous) before undergoing treatment by Matthew Manning. The doctors confirmed that the condition severely restricted his movements. After some minutes of healing by Manning, Herr Landenberger suddenly raised both arms above his head (left). The doctors had no explanation

Indian enlightenment

It became evident during the series of laboratory tests conducted in 1977 and 1978 that psychic abilities *can* be put to positive use if the person possessing them is sufficiently motivated. Matthew Manning already had the necessary motivation, and this was greatly increasing during his 1977 holiday in India. He went there, he says, 'looking for some guru or mystic, whom I expected to find seated cross-legged on the ground, ready to give me the answers to life'. He never found one, but while watching the dawn break 12,000 feet (3500 metres) up in the Himalayas, he had an experience that made a profound impression on him.

'I felt as though I was totally at one with everything around me,' he recalls, 'and at the same time I felt what can only be described as a Presence all around me. It wasn't a spirit, but something much vaster.' He was, he felt, being urged to become a healer, and to follow his course in life regardless of what others wanted him to do.

This he promptly did, and within the next three years he had become firmly established as a healer, with an enormous international practice in three continents. He now reckons that he has managed to bring relief, partial or total, to about three quarters of the several thousand people who have gone to him.

Why has his success in a notoriously

A challenge to healers

It is usually an easy matter to evaluate the effect of healing on a sick person; frequently there is a marked change for the better or even a complete cure – sometimes nothing happens at all. But there are a few illnesses that do not conform to this pattern. One of these is multiple sclerosis (MS) – a mystery disease that strikes down the young. The progress of the disease is unpredictable, with occasional natural remissions that may be taken by the hopeful as sporadic 'cures'. If one such period should coincide with a healing session it could well be taken as proof of a paranormal cure but, sadly, it may only be one stage in the erratic progress of a horrifying disease. However, because MS affects the central nervous system and because its physical effects are irreversible and devastating, any real cure would ultimately be checkable by comparing the 'cured' nervous fibres with their previous condition. The illness, which can cause blindness and incontinence and can cripple – to a greater or lesser extent – has been the target for many 'alternative medicine' theorists. However if any healer, such as Matthew Manning, could reverse the ravages of multiple sclerosis, then medical science would have to take healing more seriously – but, in any case, only time could uphold or disprove any claims of 'miracle cures' for MS.

controversial profession been so immediate and so spectacular? And what exactly does he do? Fortunately, Manning is the most articulate of healers, and has provided the answer to the second question. Healing, he insists, does not come from him, but through him. 'I am merely a channel,' he says, though he believes that he makes himself a better channel by using what he sees as the healer's most powerful tool – visualisation. The successful healer, he says, must not only want to help somebody and believe he can, but actually learn to *expect* results by 'seeing' what he wants happening. The more vivid the visualisation, the better the cure.

Mopping up the pain

He describes how he sets out to cure a patient of back pain: 'I imagine the pain symbolised by a large red area. In my imagination, I see the spine surrounded with red. I then just imagine that I have an enormous sponge; I imagine that I am pushing the sponge into the body, and I imagine the sponge is absorbing all the redness. And when the sponge is completely red, I just imagine that I am putting my arm out to the side, squeezing the sponge, and I watch the pain and the redness fall away, until the sponge is completely clean. Then I go back to the spine, mopping up pain until it has completely disappeared.'

While carrying out this visualisation routine, Manning often feels sensations of heat and tingling, as do his patients, indicating that an exchange of a still unidentified energy is taking place. 'When he placed his hands on my head, I felt a slight tremble or shudder inside my head,' Auckland secretary Idris King told the New Zealand *Sunday News* (3 August 1980). 'At the moment he touched the base of my neck, I felt as though something was being drawn from my spine.'

Above: Manning concentrates on influencing the enzyme monoamine oxidase which, if inefficient, can cause migraine – in an experiment at Birkbeck College, London. Professor John Hasted, who supervised the experiment, is convinced that Manning effectively altered the structure of the enzyme – although the results of the experiment are still hotly contested by other scientists. Manning is also said to have partially destroyed cancer cells in similar experiments in the USA

Right: Matthew Manning heals Frau Ripprich, wife of one of the two consultant doctors at the public healing demonstration at Freiburg in 1981. She had been unable to straighten her arm for several months following an accident; yet after five minutes of healing her arm straightened and full movement was restored to it

She also noted that her watch stopped at the exact moment the healing began. And she reported immediate improvement in her migraine headache. Another New Zealand patient, deprived of her sense of smell after an accident two years previously, described 'feelings of small shocks' in her nose during her healing, after which she found she was able to smell again.

Manning does not consider what he does as 'faith' healing. Faith, he says, 'seems to have very little part in it', especially in the case of sceptics, small children or animals. Yet his success must be due at least in part to his own self-confidence and determination to expect results as positive as those recorded in many of his laboratory experiments. He knows what he can do, given the right conditions, and he goes ahead and does it. Even so, he knows he cannot help everybody. Some people, it seems, have an unconscious need to remain ill. 'Many people allow themselves to become susceptible to illness simply by negative thoughts,' he says, and there is no doubt that a genuine will to improve on the part of the patient, or an attitude of unquestioning belief, as with children, is likely to encourage the healing process.

Paramedical healing has always been a controversial subject, and it is very difficult to present conclusive proof of its efficacy, since a patient who seeks help from a healer is almost certain to have already received some form of conventional medical treatment. If he then recovers after his healing, it can be argued that he has only responded to his conventional treatment or undergone 'spontaneous remission'. The paramedical healer, it seems, cannot win, unless he cures a large

Tested on television

In an Anglia television programme, *The Healers*, that was shown in January 1982, Matthew Manning was presented with two people to heal as a test. Both of them suffered from chronic, painful illnesses. The first, an American publishing executive with a painful knee, was no better after Manning tried to heal him. The second, a woman who wished to remain anonymous, had an agonising hip-joint infection. Her doctor – who was interviewed on the programme – said there was nothing that could be done for her except to give her painkilling drugs.

The subject was completely sceptical about 'faith healing'. However, after just 20 minutes of treatment by Matthew Manning she had to admit that the pain, which had been her constant companion for two years, had gone completely. And, as the commentary said, a year later the pain had still not returned. 'It can't happen – but it has!' she said.

number of people with certified 'incurable' ailments who have received no medical treatment at all, and clearly this is not likely to happen.

However, there is considerable evidence to suggest that Matthew Manning has been able to help bring about an immediate improvement in the conditions of a great many people, and he has gone further than most healers in insisting that his patients provide evidence for the permanency of their cures. In fact, he actively offers himself for research, and at least in some countries has managed to obtain the co-operation of the medical profession.

Instant cures

During a visit to West Germany in March 1981, he arranged for two doctors to examine his patients before and after their healing, and he produced a number of immediate effects variously described by the doctors as 'really amazing' and '95 per cent improvement'. In Bremen, orthopaedic surgeon Dr Thomas Hansen testified that Manning had relieved the pain in a woman's arthritic shoulder in 10 minutes, which would have been impossible – or at least extremely difficult – to do by orthodox methods. In Freiburg, doctors watched as osteo-arthritis sufferer Friedrich Landenberger flung his arms above his head in joy after a few minutes' healing, something they had verified he had previously been unable to do. Also in Freiburg, Manning treated the wife of one of the observing doctors, Dr Ripprich, who was satisfied that she had been unable to straighten her right arm for more than a year. After five minutes' healing, Frau Ripprich did straighten her arm without pain.

Manning has frequently tackled cases considered incurable by orthodox doctors. In Switzerland, he brought immediate benefit to a six-year-old autistic child, Simon Acherman, and completely cured Claude Fontana, aged eight, of a malfunctioning bladder. There is also evidence indicating that he brought about the total disappearance of a malignant stomach tumour for patient Heinz Suter, and a noticeable improvement in the condition of a French victim of multiple sclerosis.

Obviously, it will be possible to claim that Manning has been able to produce permanent cures only when his patients have lived for several years without recurrence of their symptoms, and Manning has repeatedly urged patients to send him follow-up reports. If the efficacy of paramedical healing is never finally proved, it will not have been for lack of trying on his part. He has shown that he is able to influence organic substances in controlled laboratory experiments, so there is no logical reason why he should not also be able to influence parts of living human bodies.

Yet he intends to do far more than this. 'Many of the experiments in which I have been involved show that, at some level, all living things are interconnected,' he says. 'Maybe if people realised this, they would have a greater respect for one another and for the world around them. That, to me, is more important than bending spoons or making computers malfunction.'

He is convinced that much illness is caused by people's attitudes, both individual and collective. 'We have set out on a road that is leading to physical and spiritual sickness,' he says, and he often quotes the words of Shoshone Indian Rolling Thunder: 'There should be a greater respect for the Great Spirit that is in all things; this respect has to become a way of life, not just an attitude.'

The ghost and the gossips

The couple who took up lodgings at the home of Richard Parsons seemed ordinary enough. But, as FRANK SMYTH explains, with their arrival came a series of events that left Parsons fearing for his sanity – and his life

THE 18TH CENTURY, dubbed by the Victorians 'The Age of Reason', was in fact extravagantly credulous. In spite of – or perhaps because of – the influence of rationalists such as Rousseau and Voltaire, the great ruck of citizens, from high courtiers to low commoners, were obsessed with the supernatural, the unnatural and the downright bizarre.

Sir Isaac Newton, discoverer of gravity, President of the Royal Society and Master of the Royal Mint, spent the last quarter of a century before his death in 1727 in the study of alchemy. Ben Franklin, the writer John Wilkes and the satirical poet Charles Churchill donned monks' robes and cavorted at Sir Francis Dashwood's Hell Fire Club on the Thames, acting only half in jest. Nathanael St André, George I's resident anatomist, ruined his reputation by backing the claim of a woman named Mary Tofts, who swore that she had given birth to a litter of rabbits. And an oak tree in an inn yard near Winchester that groaned out prophecies attracted queues of stately carriages until a speaking tube was discovered leading from its trunk to the landlord's quarters.

More seriously, an 18-year-old servant girl named Elizabeth Canning disappeared for a month in 1753 and then reappeared to claim that she had been held captive in a brothel at Enfield, about 10 miles (15 kilometres) from her home in the City of London. She named her captive as Mother Wells, the 'madam', and her gypsy servant Mary Squires. They had, said Elizabeth, left her in a darkened room with only a loaf of dry bread and a jug of water for sustenance. Nevertheless 'angelic' intervention had kept her alive and fit enough to break out, at the end of the month, and walk home.

In the 18th century, it seems there were no limits to the extent of human credulity. For example, the claim made by Mary Tofts that she had given birth to a litter of rabbits (below) was apparently readily accepted by at least one eminent physician. And, in 1749, crowds of the curious crammed a London theatre to witness for themselves the amazing powers of the mysterious 'bottle conjurer', who – it was promised – would disappear into a wine bottle on stage and sing from inside it. He would also 'play' a common walking stick, reproducing the sound of any instrument then in use, and for an extra gratuity would raise the spirit of any historical character. The 'bottle conjurer' did indeed disappear, but before the performance – and along with the considerable box office takings

Despite the oddity of the story, the great Bow Street magistrate and novelist Henry Fielding believed it and sent Wells and Squires for trial at the Old Bailey. Wells was condemned to death, and Squires to branding and six months' hard labour. Fortunately, the Lord Major of London, Sir Crisp Gascoyne, had sufficient sense of the ridiculous to check the story further; he discovered incontrovertible evidence that the two accused had not been near Enfield at the time,

Top: the modern Cock Lane, in the City of London. Situated on the outskirts of Smithfield (above), the street became the subject of gossip and scandal in the mid 18th century, for one of the houses was said to be haunted – by the ghost of a woman who seemed to be seeking revenge for her own untimely death

and they were released and pardoned – though not before pretty Mary Squires had been scarred with the branding iron.

The Canning affair had much in common with one of the greatest talking points of the century, the business of 'Scratching Fanny' – the ghost of Cock Lane. In both cases the credulous clamour of the mob put lives and reputations at stake on the flimsiest of evidence while eminent men looked on. Both cases promoted songs, poems, theatrical burlesques and controversy. But the hindsight of over two centuries and the light of modern psychical research suggest that something paranormal could have happened at Cock Lane, and that 18th-century mass hysteria may for once have clouded a real and striking case of poltergeist activity in the classic mould.

Cock Lane is a short, curving thoroughfare in the City of London on the fringes of Smithfield. In the mid 18th century it was a slightly run down, though respectable, area containing private houses, a tavern called the Wheat Sheaf, tradesmen's shops and a charity school. At what is now No 20 lived Richard Parsons, who drew a stipend as officiating clerk at the nearby church of St Sepulchre, Snow Hill, and had a wife and two young daughters, the eldest, Elizabeth, being about 11 years old when the Cock Lane mystery began.

Today, Parsons would probably be considered a scandal to the church, for he was a heavy drinker with a tendency to run into debt, particularly with his accommodating friend James Franzen, landlord of the Wheat Sheaf. In 1759, however, his drinking habits were no better and no worse than those of many another minor cleric, and he kept himself solvent by taking in lodgers.

In October of that year, Parsons met a genteel looking couple who introduced themselves as Mr and Mrs William Kent, newly up from Norfolk and looking for lodgings until their house in Clerkenwell was ready for them. Parsons was happy to take them in, particularly because William Kent, after paying his rent in advance, lent Parsons 12 guineas, to be paid back at a guinea a month.

Soon landlord and lodger were on sufficiently friendly terms for William to let Parsons in on his secret: he and his 'wife' Frances, known as Fanny, were not married. Two years previously, William had kept an inn and a post office at the village of Stoke Ferry, Norfolk, and had married Elizabeth Lynes, the daughter of a well-to-do grocer. Unfortunately, Elizabeth was not strong and had a difficult pregnancy, during which her sister Fanny moved in with the Kents to look after her. Elizabeth died in childbirth, and her offspring died a month later. After going through this double tragedy together, William and Fanny had grown very close, but the law at the time forbade marriage between bereaved brothers- and sisters-in-law, so the pair had decided to live in sin. Coming up to London in the summer of 1759 they decided to prove their mutual love and trust by making wills in each other's favour. Fanny had the advantage here, for though, according to later testimony, she had 'a bare hundred pounds', William had 'a considerable fortune'. Apart from half a crown to each of her two brothers and four surviving sisters, Fanny left everything 'she had or might expect' to William 'at his absolute disposal'.

A disturbed relationship

The first intimation that something was odd about the house in Cock Lane came that autumn. Kent was out of town on business, and Fanny's maid, Esther Carlisle, a redhead nicknamed 'Carrots', had been given leave. Fanny was nervous about sleeping alone and asked Richard Parsons's elder daughter Elizabeth to share her four poster bed. During the few nights the pair slept together, both were awakened by a rapping noise, seemingly coming from the wainscot of the bedroom. Elizabeth asked her mother about the noise, and was told that it was probably made by the shoemaker next door, who was in the habit of working late. When the noise began on a Sunday night, however, the family became seriously alarmed, for the cobbler was absent; Parsons, the two women and Elizabeth all heard it.

The noise 'like knuckles rapping' went on night after night, and as the comfort of the household was disturbed, so was the relationship between William Kent and Richard Parsons. Parsons had failed to keep his agreement to repay a guinea a month to his lodger, and Kent, who by now was ready to move into his own house in Clerkenwell, put the matter into the hands of his attorney. The drunken Parsons rather spitefully reacted by broadcasting the news about the Kents' marital status, or lack of it, to all and sundry.

In January the Kents moved to Clerkenwell, but the pleasure of setting up home together was marred by the fact that Fanny,

six months pregnant, had become seriously ill. William hired a doctor and an apothecary to attend to her, and the doctor diagnosed 'a confluent smallpox of a very virulent nature'.

To the sanctimonious Parsons, Fanny's illness had been sent to 'punish her for her sins'. The knocking on his wainscot had not abated, and he was beginning to form a theory about that too: it was made by the ghost of Fanny's dead sister Elizabeth. His suspicions seemed confirmed when both he and James Franzen had a frightening experience towards the end of January.

Franzen had called at the house to see Parsons and, finding him out, had sat for a while with Mrs Parsons and her two daughters. The persistent knocking frightened him, however, and he got up to leave. As he reached the kitchen door 'he saw pass by him something in white, seemingly in a sheet, which shot by him and up stairs.' The vision gave off a radiance strong enough to illuminate the face of the clock in the charity school across the street.

Franzen, thoroughly alarmed, ran back to fortify himself with brandy at the Wheat Sheaf and had no sooner lifted the glass when he heard a thunderous knocking on his front door. When he had steeled himself to open it he found Parsons, white-faced and stammering on the doorstep.

'Give me the largest glass of brandy that you have,' demanded the cleric. 'Oh Franzen! As I was going into my house just now I saw the ghost.'

'And so did I!' replied the landlord. 'And have been greatly frightened ever since. Bless me! What can be the meaning of it? It is very unaccountable.'

Meanwhile there was alarm of a different kind in Clerkenwell, for Fanny Kent was dying. An acquaintance of William's, the Reverend Stephen Aldrich of St John's, Clerkenwell, and the doctor and apothecary sat with her night and day. In the last 50 hours of her life she could take nothing but a little liquid, prepared by the apothecary and administered by the doctor. On the evening of 2 February 1760, Fanny died.

William Kent was distraught with grief and ordered a decent coffin 'both lined and covered' but for fear of prosecution he asked the undertaker not to put a name plate on the lid; the risk was minimal, but nevertheless it was an offence to live together falsely as man and wife. Fanny was laid to rest in the 12th-century vaults of St John's, as her family fumed over the provisions in her will.

The rappings at Cock Lane continued; indeed, two new lodgers there, Catherine Friend and Joyce Weatheral, later testified that they had left the house rather than suffer them further. Frustrated and frightened, Parsons called in a carpenter, Bateman Griffiths, to strip away the wainscot to seek the cause of the trouble; nothing was found and the panelling was replaced. Then Parsons called in the Reverend John Moore, rector of St Bartholomew the Great, West Smithfield, to investigate the supernatural possibilities.

The house in Cock Lane, home of the Parsons family, where every night strange rappings could be heard, apparently coming from the wooden panelling in one of the rooms. Despite investigation, no natural explanation of the sounds could be found – and Richard Parsons, the head of the household, began to fear that some supernatural agency was at work

The 'ghost' of Cock Lane identifies itself – and demands justice. See page 1573

Post script

Your letters to THE UNEXPLAINED

We have received an interesting query from Simon Goodall of Westerham, Kent, concerning a picture we published in William H. Spaulding's article 'Agents of confusion' (see page 1087):

Dear Sir,
I should like to raise a few questions about the picture of an alleged humanoid printed on page 1087 of *The Unexplained*. Implying that the picture may have been used deliberately by the DIA or NSA to plant in people's minds the idea that UFOs are piloted by aliens, the caption reads: 'This picture . . . almost certainly shows a monkey used in rocket tests, not (as alleged) a space visitor'.

Now, although I have no conclusive reason for either agreeing or disagreeing with this statement, I should like to draw your attention to a few points. First, the photograph is very unclear, and looks as if it has possibly been retouched; is there a better version in existence? If it *does* show a monkey, it seems to be a pretty big one; and why do its hands not hang down to its knees as monkeys' do, instead of being in normal human proportions? Is there any circumstantial evidence to support the contention that the creature really is a monkey? And finally, if it was used in rocket tests, could you tell me what kind of tests involve binding the subject's legs up, sticking a large round shoe on its feet and placing a large, bulbous headpiece on its head?
Yours faithfully,
Simon Goodall Westerham, Kent

Our own research had revealed that the photograph, taken in 1951, had been retrieved from FBI files. The original had, we learned, been destroyed; and there, it seemed, the trail stopped. Seeing only the photocopy led The Unexplained *to assume that this was a picture of a genuine, if earthly, animal from a spacecraft of some kind. There were many experiments conducted by the US military using rockets and monkeys to test breathing apparatus; a number of photographs of these, sensationalised as pictures of dead aliens from crashed saucers, have surfaced on the fringes of ufology. However, clarification came with a letter to* The Unexplained *from Ian Mrzyglod, editor of the magazine of the UFO research organisation Probe:*

Dear Sir,
While I am finding William H. Spaulding's article on UFOs and secret government agencies very interesting, I feel that one small point must be corrected. In the lower right-hand corner of page 1087, there is a very poor quality picture of a small being in the company of two soldiers. The caption identifies it as 'almost certainly a monkey used in rocket tests'.

Actually, the figure in the picture is a small German boy, the son of the photographer, who posed with two US military officers for an April Fool joke. The photograph was touched up to look like a dome-headed alien in custody.

As for the allegation that the creature is a space visitor, it is quite true that the *Wiesbadener Tagblatt* newspaper, which originally published the spoof, *did* make this claim – and published its retraction and explanation on 3 April 1950. The entire stunt was set up by the newspaper, and taken seriously by no one.
Yours faithfully,
Ian Mrzyglod Bristol

Mr Mrzyglod kindly sent us a copy of The Probe Report *with an extensive account of the story. A German researcher, Klaus Webner, had tracked down the original newspaper feature, which appeared under the headline 'Flying saucers over Wiesbaden. A giant flying disc crashed at the Bleidenstadter Kopf. Crew member is in protective detention. No cause for panic.'*

The crew member, the article alleged, had been detained at the Neroberg Hotel in Wiesbaden and subjected to detailed examination; it was a 'strange creature with only one leg moving about a rotating plate. Its arms come to an end in four stubby fingers. Dubbed Mr 'X', the alien was having some difficulty in adapting to the atmosphere of our planet, and had been put on an extensive programme of occupational therapy.

The newspaper piece ended with a tongue-in-cheek paragraph: 'Anyone who has made any observations is requested to call the press bureau at the town hall. Further investigations about the mysterious proceedings will be carried out and we ourselves will do everything to keep the public on its toes in the truest sense of the words.'

In April 1981, Mr Webner tracked down the perpetrator of this mammoth hoax – Wilhelm Sprunkel, a reporter on the Wiesbadener Tagblatt. *He persuaded one of the newspaper's photographers, Hans Scheffler, to photograph ripples in the local sanatorium pond and superimpose these images on a picture of central Wiesbaden to make them look like flying saucers; this photograph was accompanied by the caption 'two ''flying saucers'' circled – unseen by Wiesbaden's population – around the market place church. The noises of the rushing discs were not perceptible because ultra-sonic waves, as is well-known, cannot be heard by the human ear.'*

For the 'humanoid' picture, Hans Scheffler simply photographed his five-year-old son Peter with two US soldiers 'borrowed' from a local army base. The hose, breathing gear, spacesuit, single foot and huge head were painted in later – only the jerry-can carried by the soldier on the left is real.

It seems extraordinary that what was so obviously a hoax could have ended up as a major piece of alleged evidence for the crashing of an extra-terrestrial spaceship. And yet, in their book The Roswell incident *William Moore and Charles Berlitz print it as a picture of a humanoid that survived an alleged crash of a flying saucer in New Mexico in July 1947. Klaus Webner claims that, when he was researching the story at the* Wiesbadener Tagblatt, *he was told that there had never been any enquiries about the incident. Messrs Berlitz and Moore were clearly unwise to take the information on trust.*

A detailed account of the hoax and its unmasking is printed in The Probe Report *for September 1981. It can be obtained for 65p, including postage, from The Editor,* The Probe Report, *16 Marigold Walk, Ashton, Bristol.*

Send *your* letters to THE UNEXPLAINED, Orbis House, 20–22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

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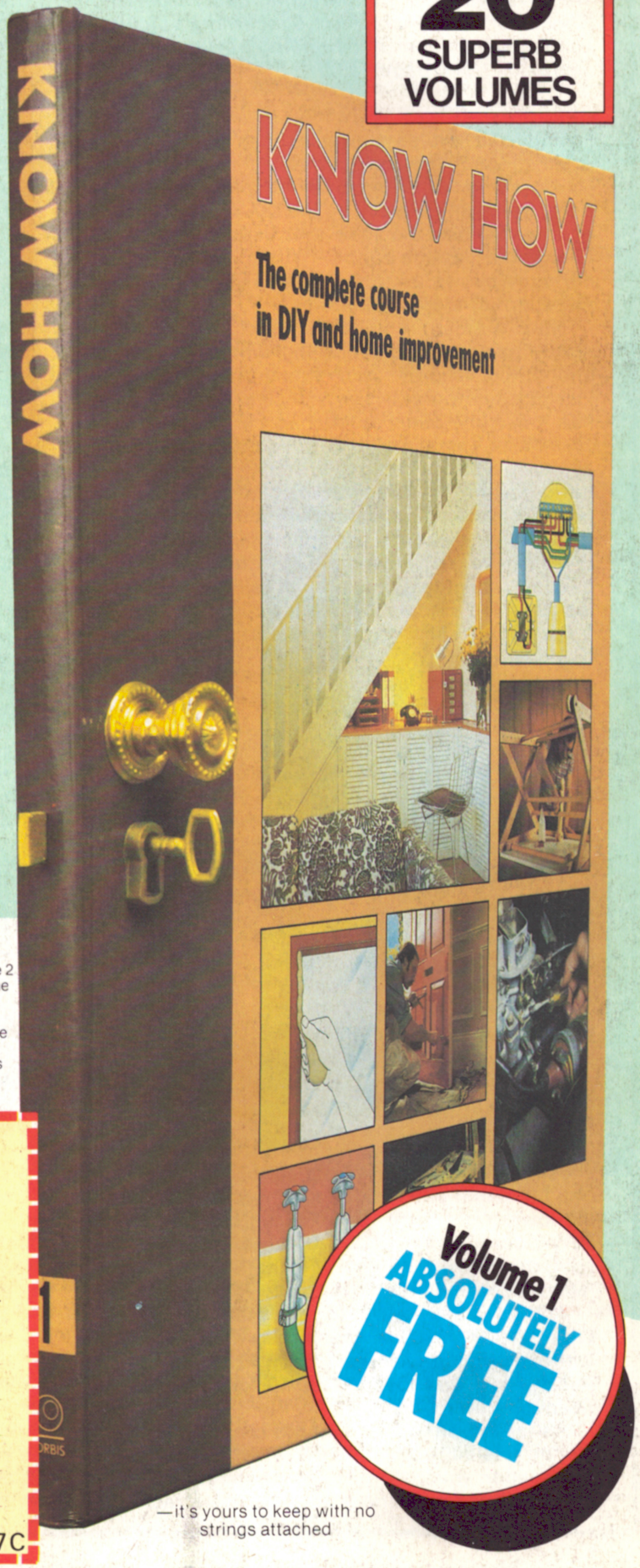

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